## Dodd, Murphy Call for Better Affordable Housing for Seniors, People with Disabilities; Murphy Testifies at Banking Hearing in Support of Bill to Provide Housing for People with Disabilities

Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) testified on how to expand affordable housing options for seniors and Americans living with disabilities at a Senate Banking Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development hearing.

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WASHINGTON - Today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) testified on how to expand affordable housing options for seniors and Americans living with disabilities at a Senate Banking Subcommittee on Housing, Transportation, and Community Development hearing. Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT), Chairman of the Banking Committee, joined Murphy in calling for the modernization of federal housing assistance programs to ensure they can meet the needs of low-income residents of Connecticut and the rest of the nation.

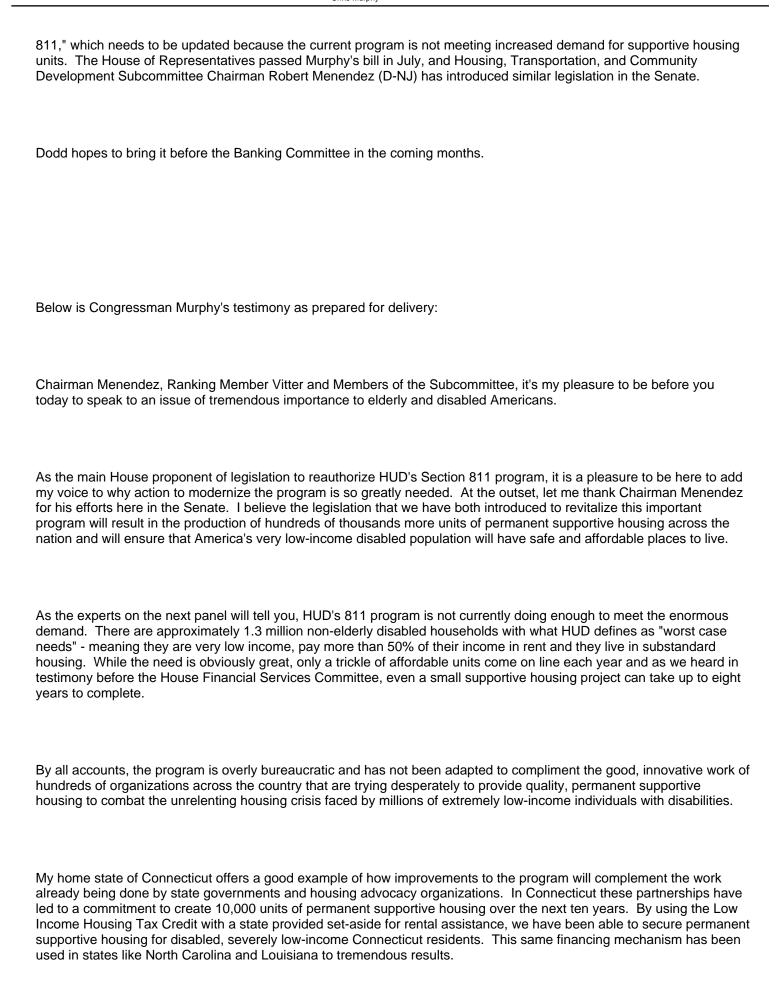
Murphy testified on his bill to modernize the "Section 811" housing program, the only federal program dedicated to helping low income citizens with disabilities live independently in the community through affordable housing and supportive services. The "Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act of 2009" is named in honor of longtime Connecticut resident Frank Melville, an influential figure in affordable housing policy in Connecticut and across the country. Frank Melville was the original Chair of the Melville Charitable Trust, a leading source of funding for research and supportive housing for over fifteen years.

"We need to provide Connecticut seniors and citizens with disabilities with more affordable housing choices," said Dodd. "Last week, Diane Randall from the Partnership for Strong Communities in Hartford testified to my Committee that renting a modest 1-bedroom apartment in Connecticut would cost a person with disabilities living off of Supplemental Security Income over 116 percent of their income. It is simply unsustainable. Congressman Murphy has shown real leadership with this bill and I'm glad to work with him on this and other efforts to give Connecticut residents better affordable housing options."

"In Connecticut, it's clear that we have a significant shortage of housing for extremely low income people with disabilities," said Murphy. "We have the know-how in Connecticut to fix this problem and achieve the goal of helping people with physical disabilities and mental illnesses live independently - all we need are the tools, which this bill gives us."

Working closely with Connecticut housing and mental health experts, Murphy introduced the bill to modernize "Section

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This approach, a public-private partnership leveraging existing tax credits for expanded use, is included, on a national

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scale, in both the Chairman's legislation, S. 1481, the Frank Melville Supportive Housing Investment Act, and my legislation, H.R. 1675 which passed the House in July.

This approach, Mr. Chairman, of public-private partnerships, will derive more units of permanent supportive housing using the same funding we use today - more bang for our buck. Currently, the average capital cost of an 811 project is about \$100,000 per unit plus a monthly rental payment equal to about \$6,000 a year. Under our legislation, the capital investment is wiped out because the units are being built through existing credits and programs and because they are already affordable units, the rent subsidy will be less than the \$6,000 a year average.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, we fund this change by using the funds currently set aside for 811 Mainstream Vouchers. HUD has done a less than adequate job in ensuring these vouchers are used to support people with disabilities - they don't monitor or track them - and while there is a great need for Mainstream Vouchers generally, these funds would be better used to ensure that 811 eligible individuals have access to permanent supportive housing.

Beyond this change, Mr. Chairman, the legislation also allows States and state housing agencies to do much of the bureaucratic paperwork involved in these applications, which will greatly expedite the applications process. These are but a few, I believe, of the refinements outlined in the two bills that will make the 811 program more efficient and less bureaucratic using federal dollars in a way that produces truly produces permanent supportive housing.

Mr. Chairman, I know you will hear from the next panel, what we heard across the Capital last year and earlier this year. The Section 811 program is worth preserving but must be reformed if we hope to meet its overwhelming demand.

Thank you Mr. Chairman for your generous allotment of time and I am happy to any questions your or the other Members of the Committee may have.

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